

The LENTINIST

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Soviet Union

'Guilty' or 'innocent' Now free all Irish political prisoners

UNSAFE and unsatisfactory" was the reason given for overturning the convictions of the Maguire Seven. Obviously a late in the day vindication for the six who spent long years in British prisons. But too late for the seventh, Giuseppe Conlon, who died in prison.

The inquiry into the Maguire convictions was a knock on effect of the Guildford Four. But, bodge and falsified evidence at the trial aside, it was always obvious that the seven were stitched up and sent down in the most blatant fashion. The central figure at the trial, Annie Maguire, professed to hate the IRA as much as those who were jailing her, and hung pictures of Elizabeth Windsor on her walls. Yet she received the same brutal treatment that Irish republicans have come to expect from British justice: intimidated, abused, one 'interview' took place with a gun to her head. A popularised phrase sums this up - innocent until proven Irish.

The way in which the convictions of the Guildford Four and Maguire Seven were overturned does nothing to change this. A consensus was reached within the British establishment that it was more troublesome to maintain the farce than change tack in the interests of 'justice'. Maybe the judicial system does not come out smelling of roses, exactly, but right has won through, albeit a little belatedly. Blame is safely thrust onto the shoulders of a forensic scientist or two (preferably now dead) or a convenient geriatric judge. Our wonderful 'democracy' emerges, credentials intact. We are even told that the system has been strengthened by this experience.

Of course, no socialist or, for that matter, honest democrat will be taken in by this. These people, along with the Birmingham Six, Winchester Three and Judith Ward, have been openly framed up by the British state. Tens of thousands have been held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. These are acts of state terrorism against the Irish people; the modern day 'croppy lie down'.

Recent events have not changed this. The machine which implements this is still intact. No section of the establishment has challenged the fundamentals by which the prisoners were framed. This is no mere 'error of judgement', as Labour MP Chris Mullin would have it. What we have seen is Britain's attempt to protect and refine its repressive structures, not abolish them. Britain has shown it can imprison Irish people for over a decade, release them with a shrug and go on to do exactly the same at a future date. This 'error' is neither a misfortune nor carelessness, but a conscious policy. People are still



being held under the PTA, and the Irish community in Britain still lives under its threat. What has been shown is that if it can happen to Annie Maguire, it can happen to anyone. Okay, so you may be absolved after 15 years, but think of those years, think of Giuseppe Conlon...

This intimidation has worked, of that there can be no doubt. In the early seventies, there were a growing number of people mobilising for troops out of Ireland. The backbone of this was the Irish community. The state slapped down on this and the British left ran. The Irish community was left to bear the brunt of the attack. This situation has crippled the Irish solidarity movement, and working class politics in general, since.

What the Irish people have been victim to has been used against others who have had the temerity to fight back. For instance, the Tottenham Three were framed up in exactly the same way as many

Irish prisoners, and suffered equally from the lack of any wide-scale working class mobilisation in their defence.

The freeing of the Maguires, Winchester Three and Guildford Four was not a result of a mass campaign, but of a struggle within the ruling class, where both sides are agreed on their fundamental aims: the occupation of the Six Counties must be continued, and Britain must be equipped with the methods to enable this. Some argue that frame-ups and shoot-to-kill in effect cause the 'democratic' facade of British imperialism to slip, and should therefore be dropped. But they don't dispute Britain's criminalisation of the struggle for Irish freedom.

Because there has been no effective campaign within the working class for the freedom of the prisoners and, tied in with this, the freedom of Ireland, this attitude holds sway within the working class. The Maguires and many

others have been jailed with ease, and held there, through the British state's ability to whip up anti-Irish chauvinism within the working class.

Central to this is the ideological campaign to criminalise the IRA. Its ability to strike at military targets in Britain this summer, especially car bomb attacks, elicited a Scotland Yard warning that no one was safe, and that we should all be on our guards. The media leapt on this with ill-disguised glee, ranting hysterically that we were all targets.

The thought of OAPs crawling under their Reliant Robins looking for packages of Semtex is perhaps a little bizarre, but the rationale behind this is to portray a struggle for national liberation against the British state as a psychopathic campaign directed at all right thinking, reasonable people. With this established, workers in Britain will support, or at least acquiesce to, the oppression of the Irish

people, complete with SAS death squads, the PTA, strip searches and all the rest.

While this is the case, even if all the current framed prisoners are released, there will be more Maguires, more Winchester Threes. That can only be changed by a working class mass movement against the British occupation of Ireland. If we are to defeat the frame-ups we must defeat what lies behind them.

Workers in Britain must take the side of freedom in the Irish war. As it stands, many 'Marxists' who profess to give leadership to our class, in reality take sides with their own state. *Militant* responded to the IRA's legitimate campaign against the British army in Britain and Europe with an editorial, 'Why Marxists oppose individual terrorism'. The *Morning Star* was worse. When Nick Mullen was hit with a savage 30 year sentence, the *Star* reported little differently from the *Daily Mail*, chauvinistically stating that an 'IRA fixer' had been jailed. No demands for his release, not even a liberal complaint at the length of his sentence.

The Birmingham Six are still in jail because Britain is still in the Six Counties. In all probability, that will be the case until the working class in Britain takes up the fight for Irish freedom as its own. Until that time, Britain will continue to terrorise and frame Irish people; not because of any 'errors of judgement' by an ailing judiciary and a few 'bad apples' in the police, but because it is necessary for imperialism to do so to legitimise its rule.

The ructions over the cases of the Maguires et al still provide a basis to raise the question in a genuinely anti-imperialist way. Cracks open up in the establishment which provide the ability to mobilise disquiet from below. Not, however, on the basis of 'pressure group' politics. Such pressure will never force Britain to relinquish its hold on Ireland and thus criminalise Irish people. But the case of the Birmingham Six, or of shoot-to-kill, provide the basis to draw workers into action against Britain's 'dirty war', and by doing so attack the hold of chauvinism by raising the question of Britain's war as a whole.

While fighting for the freedom of the framed prisoners, we must remember that there is no such thing as a 'guilty' Irish political prisoner. The only terrorists in Ireland are in khaki, their 'godfathers' in Westminster. As long as this situation prevails, Irish women and men will continue to be jailed for the 'crime' of their nationality. Appeals for justice from those who perpetrate this will only meet a brick wall. Workers in Britain must take sides - for Britain's defeat in the Irish war.

Sean Quinn



THE bosses' media and, to their eternal shame, a rag bag of 'official communists' and assorted petty bourgeois leftists, said that Romania had a 'glorious revolution' in December 1989. It was no such thing. There was a preplanned counterrevolutionary coup carried out by the army hierarchy; the masses only played a secondary, supporting role.

Ceausescu and his family clique were not loved. That we never denied. They lived a life of privilege while imposing huge, it could be argued unnecessary, sacrifices on the masses in a desperate attempt to free Romania from debt thraldom to international finance capital.

In inverse proportion to the resulting shortages there was an abundance of rhetoric. Ceausescu claimed that his crippled backward country was rapidly advancing to communism. The gap between such talk and day to day life deepened the masses' alienation. Consequently Romania was not even ruled through consent, rather fear. In short Ceausescu — while much admired by the western establishment throughout the 1970s — was the leader of a not untypical example of the bureaucratic socialist state.

Imperialism, however, has never been fully satisfied with Iliescu and the National Salvation Front. Nor did the presence of armed workers on the streets during the overthrow of Ceausescu bode well for opening the country up to unrestrained exploitation.

The NSF was committed to the market, true. But it was full of ideological contradictions and full of former, only semi-reformed, communists. Their acceptance of the market did not go hand in hand with a cold determination to impose all the anti-working class measures it entails: mass unemployment, return of former owners and selling the country's resources off at bargain basement prices. Much preferred therefore was the Peasants Party led by recently returned millionaire Ratiu. His capitalism is Thatcherite in tooth and claw.

It was not to be. The NSF won the general election with 80% of the vote, a figure not disputed by western observers in spite of allegations of minor irregularities. Infuriated, and with the encouragement of imperialism, Ratiu, along with disorientated students, members of the Iron Guard and other assorted fascist scum, organised what can only be described as a right wing coup against the "neo-Stalinists" (thus gaining initial sympathy from more than one Trotskyite group in Britain).

After occupying University Square, the Interior Ministry and central police HQ was sacked, national TV taken over and parliament threatened. Aware of the connivance of some police tops and not trusting in the army's reliability, Iliescu turned to the industrial working class. Acting not as a class for itself, rather as a class in itself, "burly proletarians, miners and others of the sort" (*The Independent*) were mobilised and succeeded, with commendable restraint, in spiking Ratiu's power bid.

Apart from blind fear of workers exercising any sort of social power, imperialism is determined that Iliescu learns to behave like a loyal satrap (just like Noroaga used to). To persuade him the west has been cracking the neo-colonialist whip: a hysterical propaganda campaign, ending EC 'aid' and lectures against "rent-a-mob" (Foreign Office minister William Waldegrave).

There is no room for illusions in Iliescu. His unpopularity with the imperialists has nothing to do with the absurd notion that Romania has had some sort of "half completed" political revolution (*Militant* June 22 1990). If anything, its counterrevolution is only *half completed*. This, not wishful thinking, must be our starting point. We say Romanian workers should defend the NSF regime against imperialism and fascistic reaction. But only in order to defend their ability to make a social revolution against the NSF and all forces of capitalist restoration.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Poll Tax

Congratulations on *The Leninist* article (No 91) against the poll tax; a true revolutionary class approach in contrast to that of the so called revolutionary left of Trotskyism.

The SWP, Militant and others who consider that withholding payment or ceasing to collect the tax will cause the downfall of the Tory government is typical of left reformists who see the struggle in a narrow negative perspective of changing the parliamentary government from Tory to Kinnock Labourism. The Workers Power group, while appearing to be more militant, is basically no different: their strategy is to tie the movement to the official trade union and TUC misleaders (see item 7 of their proposed resolution for the Anti-Poll Tax Federation Trade Union conference) and the return of a parliamentary Labour government which is committed to another form of tax on the workers. It is no advance to call for militant action if the end result is subjection to the official Labourite leaders, who have betrayed the workers time and time again.

The issue of the poll tax — notwithstanding the middle class sectarian attitude of the RCP — as with all other class issues such as fighting for higher wages, against anti-trade union laws, against rent increases or cuts in health service provisions etc. are all issues upon which we struggle to organise the workers along class lines, raise the workers' class consciousness, develop the class vanguard party with the perspective of laying the groundwork for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system itself, irrespective of which capitalist government is in office.

An essential task as raised in *The Leninist* is, in the build up to a successful march from Glasgow to London, to struggle for democratic control of the ABAPTF, with recallable delegates elected by all anti-poll tax groups. I suggest that Leninists take the initiative and with concrete proposals for a democratic constitution organise a united front to democratise the Federation. The Federation is a mass working class movement composed of affiliated groups throughout the country, all of which should have representation to a national assembly, and the march from Glasgow to London controlled by a committee elected by the marchers themselves. No political group should have bureaucratic control, and all supporters should be allowed on the march.

As with the Bolsheviks in the soviets, the leadership must win its right to leadership on the basis of its proven policy and strategy in struggle, and be subject to recall if it fails to represent the true interests of the class. Democratic rights should be given to all to allow this process to take place.

P Conlon
South London

Just Deserts?

I was spending the night at Euston Station after missing the last train home. As the concourse at Euston station is covered, well lit, always open, and not too cold, lots of homeless people use it as a shelter at night; it's like a city, with rows of sleeping people spaced out along all the walls. Police walk around, but only expel the most obviously decrepit drunks. I was dozing under the telephones

(fewer drafts than in the main area) when I was joined by a lad wearing the psychedelic green uniform the military use to make them harder to see in a wood, and carrying a large military style rucksack like bag.

He told me he'd been in the British army in Northern Ireland, but had been made redundant on health grounds after being shot twice by the IRA. He'd been unable to get a job in his home town, so had come to London to look for work, and arrived that day. I gave him a copy of *The Leninist*. The lad didn't read it, he apparently had absolutely no opinion either way about Ireland and was far more interested in the comic I also gave him.

He said though that a surprising number of British soldiers in Ireland develop IRA sympathies, and some became communists, although he himself had no political views. As if to confirm what he said, after a while an older man joined us, who from his obvious fitness and strange air of confidence and self possession I guessed was a soldier.

He said to the lad, in a tone of artificial friendliness "Hi, how are you doing, where have you been keeping yourself?" The lad replied warily "I think you've got the wrong bloke mate." "Weren't you in Ireland?" "I was, but I left." "Why?" I began to realise the older man thought the lad might have run away from the army.

Instead of explaining about being made redundant, and coming to London to look for work, he said "That's my business." "It's just that we've been having a lot of absconctions." "Are you a red beret?" "If I was I wouldn't say, would I?" He looked at the lad for a while, as if still not quite convinced he wasn't a military runaway, then said "Well, watch how you go", and left us alone, to my relief.

I asked the lad: "What does red beret mean?" "Military police" he replied, surprised by my feigned ignorance. I was amazed at the implications of the conversation: soldiers really do run away from Ireland, and maybe the lad was right when he said some of his mates became IRA sympathisers and communists. Obviously ordinary members of the army are not so unitedly loyal to the capitalist system as the bourgeois media would have people think.

Zoe Ellwin
Herts

Bureaucracy

Comrade Conlon, in a letter in the last issue (June 8) objects to my characterisation of the bureaucracy as being "never progressive". As examples of the progressive nature of the bureaucracy, he cites examples of the Soviet Union's aid (in the past, if not now) to Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola, etc. and defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, such as in World War II.

I agree, these were progressive. But to deduce that the bureaucracy therefore has a progressive 'side' smacks of an empirical approach. The contradictions which the comrade outlines, where the bureaucracy defined itself "on the one hand against imperialism and on the other hand the revolutionary working class" are real, but this does not give us an understanding of the *essence* of its nature.

This 'on the one hand, on the other' outlook is eclectic rather than dialectical. After all, on the one hand, capitalism leads to

impoverishment and war. But then, on the other, it has sustained the greatest growth in productivity ever seen, during the post war period. We judge the progressive nature of a society by its ability to develop the productivity of labour, does that mean we therefore ascribe to capitalism some kind of "dual nature" to capitalism because of its achievements over the last forty years? Obviously not. The essence of capitalism in its imperialist phase is unequivocally reactionary, not per se because of what it has done in the field of production, but because it acts as a block on what is possible today, in a world planned and ruled by the working class.

We must view the bureaucracy through the same eyes. Yes, there have been great achievements in the socialist world. But these achievements have been crippled in their scope by the retrogressive influence of the force which itself has implemented them — the bureaucracy.

The caste interests of the bureaucracy have been a *relative fetter* on social development. Is this progressive? No. But it had not evolved a thoroughgoing reactionary character until it became an *absolute fetter*, and began to overturn the gains of socialism.

In characterising the bureaucracy — or anything, for that matter — we must understand its essence of its contradictory development, and not merely rest with an exposition of the results of those contradictions, as it seems comrade Conlon does.

Alan Merrik
London

CPUSA

From recent reports, it seems that the Communist Party of the United States is faring little better than its eastern European 'official communist' counterparts. Earlier in the month, the *Independent* did an interview with CPUSA secretary, Gus Hall. It seems the party is getting a lot of air-time, what with the collapse of the socialist states and all (it's an ill wind, eh Gus?). Hall even claimed that the party has a million members, counting those 'underground' (six feet?).

Hall's rather thin optimism aside, though, the party seems to be rushing to the cliff's edge. It was clear that he can make no sense of the states they used to fawn before. Its paper, the *People's Daily World* is going weekly — a forewarning to the *Yawning Star*, perhaps — and it has been floated that sections of the leadership, particularly younger black comrades, are straining at the leash to get in on the pickings in the Democratic Party that Jesse Jackson has backed.

The chickens are coming home to roost with a vengeance. 'Official communists' in this country that have looked to the 'hard' CPUSA for a lead, watch and squirm.

Martin Kaye
Sheffield

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Marching against the tax



The capitalist class can finance its own state, as far as the UWC is concerned; workers have no interest in solving its financial problems

MARCHING through the crowded streets of Brixton on the afternoon of Saturday June 9, employed and unemployed workers joined together on the South London Unemployed Workers Charter's anti-poll tax demonstration. To the obvious sympathy of passers by the demonstration kept up a barrage of militant anti-poll tax slogans.

For example in an area with a large black working class population, the slogan "Black and white, unite and fight: smash Thatcher's poll tax!" emphasised the necessity to overcome racist divisions if a united working class fightback is to be achieved. "The workers, united, will never pay the poll tax!" gave expression to the call from the National Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) for the widespread "Don't pay" movement to be developed into "Don't collect" industrial action and taken to the level of indefinite general strike to smash both the poll tax and the Thatcher government through working class action.

Although, in the face of mass non-payment and the looming possibility of a Tory general election defeat, ministers are divided over the proposed extension of "charge capping" (ie poll tax capping) powers next month, Thatcher herself is adamant, and has tied her reputation lock, stock and barrel to seeing her poll tax project through.

Wishful thinking about the 'unworkable' nature of the Tory poll tax, how it will cause chaos and collapse of its own accord, or how it is unenforceable because of the 'impossible' task of processing (perhaps) millions of court cases against non-payers, dangerously underestimates the possibility of Thatcher seeing the thing through successfully. Such attitudes may give Dutch courage to many refusniks. But the tables can only be turned on Britain's ruling class through the working class welding itself together and acting in unity as a class through political strike action.

This can only be done *despite* Britain's bourgeois workers' party, the Labour Party — only if working class loyalty to Labourism is broken. Hence the anti-Labour Party slogans on the UWC march: "Labour says: 'Pay poll tax'; stabs the knife in workers' backs!"

The Labour Party's unwillingness to break the law — a necessity

in the anti-poll tax fight — is paralleled by the trade union bureaucracy. NUT general secretary Doug MacEvoy condemned 1,000 Barnsley teachers striking against 22 redundancies caused by poll tax capping; and the Nalgo leadership won a 3 to 2 majority of conference delegates against refusing to collect the tax, so official industrial action will be confined to protecting the pay and conditions of poll tax workers. So if the 160 striking housing estate staff in Greenwich go beyond their demands for adequate staffing and regrading because of the extra duties of poll tax staff, and oppose the tax itself, their strike pay will be withdrawn.

If Thatcher and the Tories are defeated by Kinnock's capitalist programme, instead of by working class action, this will be no victory for the working class. Indeed, Kinnock's job — like the Wilson/Cathalagh governments which preceded Thatcher — will be to abuse working class loyalty, obtaining acquiescence where Thatcher failed. This is the true role of Kinnock's 'roof tax', which the Militant leaders of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation have jumped so quickly to support, advising Kinnock — and his beloved capitalist state — that it will be "easier to collect".

In response, the UWC marchers chanted: "Poll tax, roof tax, no way! No more taxes will we pay!" The capitalist class can finance its own state, as far as the UWC is concerned; workers have no interest in solving its financial problems. Of course, we are interested in defending and enhancing the 'social wage' represented by local services — indeed, such concessions can best be won through militant mass action — but local government is part of the capitalist state and cannot solve the problems of our class.

The end of march rally in St Matthews, Brixton Hill, heard reports from the Tooting anti-poll tax group on the clumsy efforts of Tory Wandsworth to (inadvertently) organise a mass demonstration at court by summoning the first 4,800 refusniks (all these from street names beginning A-C) to court on the same day; and from the Trafalgar Square Defendents Campaign, which wants to hear from witnesses to the conflict on March 31.

The Workers Theatre Movement put across its powerful message, both on the pavement before the march and again at the rally,

performing the original 1930s means test piece *Three frames and two pictures* as well as *Axe the tax!*

Mass unemployment is endemic in the capitalist system, especially as another general crisis looms. In April, the longest continuous fall in (official) unemployment figures, achieved with the help of the longest sequence of manipulations in the official method of counting, came to an end with a rise of 2,200 in the seasonally adjusted figure. This was followed by a further 4,400 in May, leaving even the official figure at the thoroughly unacceptable level (for our class) of 1,611,000. If this is the low point of the graph in the *pre-crisis* period, we can well imagine what the general crisis will bring!

Unemployed workers have a special interest in developing class-wide action to smash the poll tax. Even those on income support are liable to pay 20% of the tax out of their poverty line allowance, and a refusal to pay can be met by deducting the tax at source. The unemployed are therefore not in a position to resist the tax effectively on their own. Political strike action by employed workers is a necessity.

This is a message the UWC will be carrying into the ABAPTF nationwide anti-poll tax march from September 3 (Glasgow) to October 13 (London), campaigning for strike action in each town the march passes through, and for indefinite general strike action at the end. Because of the importance of building class wide action against the poll tax, the UWC has cancelled its September 1990 march and lobby of the TUC in favour of mobilising for the ABAPTF march. A new UWC collection sheet is available (send SAE) for street and workplace collections to help finance unemployed marchers.

UWC supporters must take an active lead in the anti-poll tax movement, fight for maximum support for and unemployed participation in the march, at the same time drawing all sections of the working class into the anti-poll tax movement.

• We need to transform local Anti-Poll Tax Unions into councils of action with recallable delegates and workers' defence corps capable of defending demonstrations and picket lines from police attack.

• For indefinite general strike action to smash the poll tax!

Stan Kelsey

For three months 2,300 workers at Waterford Crystal, Ireland, fought a brave rearguard action against management demands of wage cuts of between 12 and 20 percent, along with an unpaid increase in hours and compulsory redeployment. Workers responded with an all out strike, support committees were established and encouraging collections from other trade unionists were received. Negotiations have resulted in management concessions; retirement ages will be higher and wage cuts will be restored when profitability returns to 8%, instead of £10 million. Although the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union — which is recommending this rotten package — gave the strike official recognition, ATGWU and Irish Congress of Trades Unions bureaucrats refused to stand on the strikers' platform. They will not share platforms with representatives of the national liberation movement: one of the leading activists in the strike is an IRSP member. This is a graphic illustration of how the division of Ireland is felt both sides of the border, and of the 'Uncle Tom' nature of the union bureaucracy. The bosses have also benefited from the division between Irish and British workers. Waterford Crystal owns Wedgwood. Attempts to spread the action to Britain only met with a lukewarm response. Messages of support and donations to the strike fund can be sent to ATGWU, Keizer Street, Waterford City, County Waterford, Ireland. AM

The Tories are set to clamp down on homeless youth. Over the past decade, the number of homeless has soared, given impetus by the government's withdrawal of benefit from 16-18 year olds and the lower level of Income Support 18-25 year olds get, which mean that many young working class people are forced out of home as their families cannot afford to support them. The poll tax will also add to this, increasing the expense on each household. The government's response is to make available a pitiful £15m to fund more hostels: young homeless won't touch the existing ones because they are dangerous, frightening. Bedlam-like places, full of people the cost cutting Tory government cleared out of mental homes to return them to "care in the community". The police are being told to strongly enforce the 1824 Vagrancy Act. The idea of this is to break up the cardboard cities that Britain such a bad image with tourists. Homeless youth will be forced to accept the shelters, run by the state, sanctimonious do-gooders or religious bigots or face fines and imprisonment. We say: Housing is no luxury — it is a right. But it is one that governments, whether Labour or Tory, have not given us. So we must demand it, and organise to get it ourselves. New housing is needed. But much of what exists is unoccupied, and should be occupied by the homeless. Organisation is the key: occupy and fight off the private or state landlord attempts to evict us. SQ

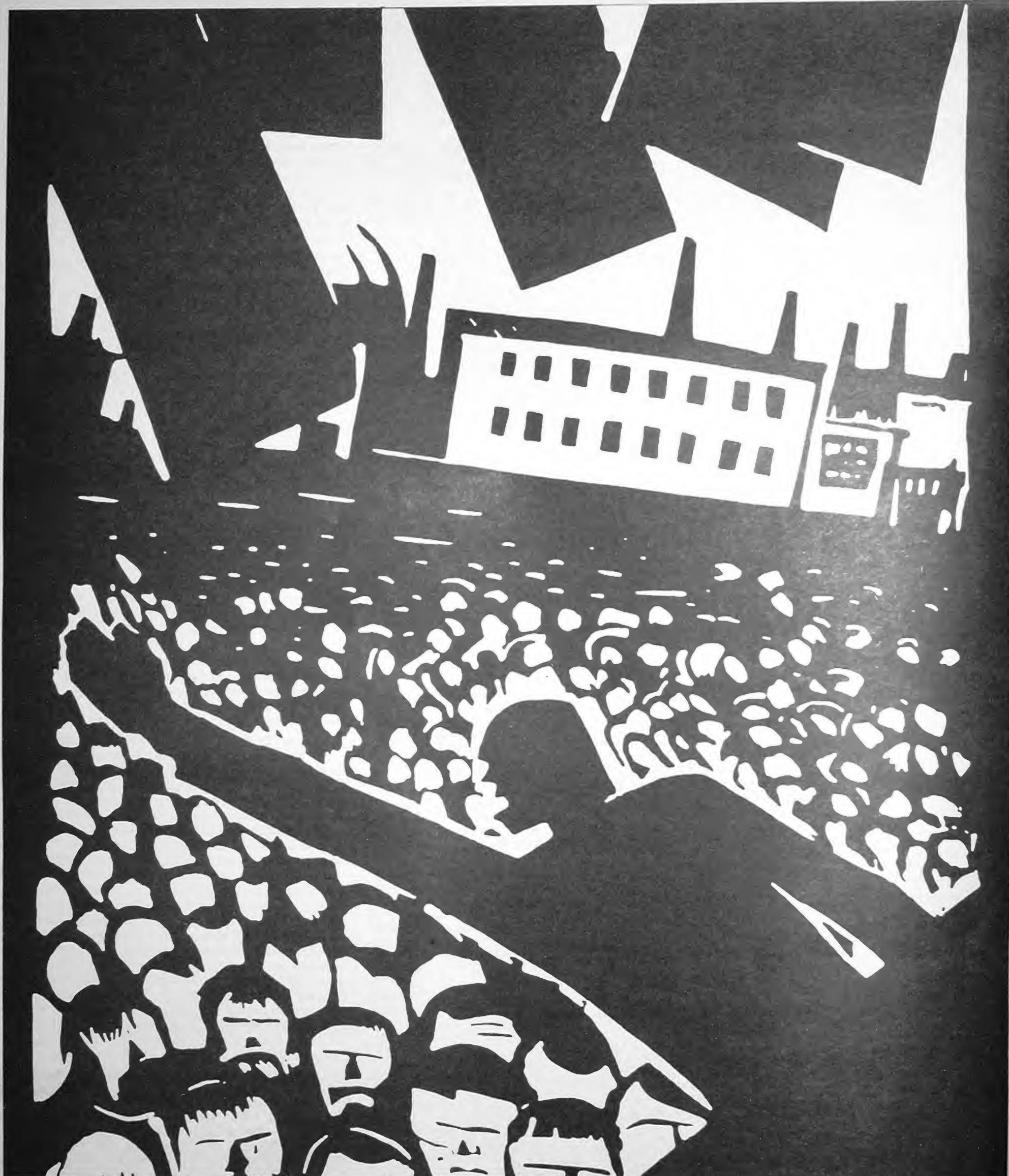
The New Communist Party's 'ideological conference' was attended by somewhat under 100 people. As predicted in the last issue of *The Leninist*, far from resolving the crisis of these 'official communists', the conference did little else than provide an insular forum for its aging and declining membership to pat each other on the back and carry on as usual. In a situation when bureaucratic socialism is collapsing into the arms of imperialism, and within the organisation, where three members of the central committee including the *New Worker*'s editor have just walked out, this cretinous myopia was best summed up in a brief exchange between one of our comrades and NCP central committee member, Rene Sams, who came out with the one-liner, "crisis, what crisis?". If they can't even see their crisis, how do they hope to resolve it in six hours; one, furthermore, which does not allow any alternative resolutions to be submitted, where the bumbling Gensec Eric Trevett takes up much of the time with his ramblings and where the conference is split up into working groups, to prevent discussion among those present. Given this, and the fact that, judging from the age of those present, most of the youth seem to have left with the three CC members, reports of the NCP's death are not at all exaggerated. The sooner the rest of 'official communism' follows it to the grave, the better. DR

Through the summer



We are now in the midst of our annual June-July Summer Offensive, our aim is £25,000. While this means that we will generate large amounts of money it also means that many comrades and friends tend to ignore our vital £600 monthly fighting fund. Not surprising therefore in June we look like being seriously down. Although we have only received £331 in so far many thanks must go in particular to comrades WS, JK, FF, LT and AS (who sends us a regular stream of donations). Other comrades and readers take note.

The Summer Offensive and the fight for communist morality



For two months out of every year, comrades in and around the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) conduct a campaign of fundraising called the Summer Offensive

THIS YEAR, in our seventh Summer Offensive, our organisation has set itself the target of raising £25,000 in the eight weeks of June and July, a 25% increase from last year. This feature of our work was originally drawn from the experience of our comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey who run a similar annual campaign. The style of the campaigns is revealed in the titles we and our comrades of the CPT chose: for us, the *Summer Offensive*, for the Turks, it is their *Summer Attack*.

During this two month period, our comrades set themselves minimum targets of hundreds, even thousands of pounds; many, usually most comrades, bust through these targets. Leninists perform financial miracles for the sake of their Party and class during the annual Summer Offensive.

The contrast between our *Offensive* and the weak and whiney *appeals* launched by the wrecks of 'official Communism' could not be more stark. In previous years we have noted some comparative statistics which would be deeply embarrassing to members of organisations like the Communist Party of Britain, the New Communist Party or the Communist Party of Great Britain (*Marxism Today*) – if these people had even a scrap of revolutionary morality or principle:

- Our Fifth Summer Offensive in 1988 saw us raise more in the first 24 hours than five of the Euro CPGB's 19 districts started with as final target for their two month campaign!
- Our sympathisers in this campaign – despite the fact they were only taking part in the Offensive to a relatively limited extent – raised more as individuals than three whole districts of the Euro CPGB!

This type of statistical comparison can be repeated *ad infinitum*. This year's Offensive, for example, kicked off with £2,300 collection at its launch meeting in central London, a sum which dwarfs the targets district organisations of the 'official communists' are set to scabble together in the course of their two month 'appeals'.

But this particular comparative exercise has only a limited value, especially given the fact that these shambolic jokes of organisations are tottering on the verge of oblivion anyway. No, what we must measure ourselves against are the tasks that real life is presenting to us, what is objectively necessary to build a Communist Party in Britain today. Viewed in this way, we can see that the Summer Offensive of the CPGB (*TL*) not only represents an impressive technical/financial achievement. It is also a vital 'moment' in the struggle to reforge a Leninist Party.

Sympathisers

The Summer Offensive is *unique* to the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*). We are the only British organisation capable of running such a campaign because we are the only genuinely Leninist organisation in Britain today. Opportunist politics – of left or right varieties – preclude the possibility of building anything like our Summer Offensive.

Like any political organisation worth its salt, the CPGB (*TL*) has relatively large numbers of sympathisers in its periphery. The Summer Offensive provides the ideal opportunity to overcome doubts, to purge backward ideas and turn sympathisers into committed supporters.

Even though we are in the midst of a period of reaction, as our National Secretary comrade John Bridge made clear in his speech at the launch of the Summer Offensive, this is no ordinary period of reaction. In the main our organisations are not in danger of being smashed by police terror. Rather the danger comes from developments in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the false idea that communism has been defeated in practice. Although our comrades will be under increased pressure from the dominant (bourgeois) ideology in Britain, there is every possibility of strengthening our organisation and steeling new cadres, given the upswing in the class struggle in Britain.

A Communist Party as a revolutionary form of consciousness of the proletariat is a process by its very nature. It comes into being as a product of struggle in the here and now. It

does not, as some seem to think, come into being fully armed and ready for war when the trumpet of revolution sounds forth. A genuine Communist Party must be fought for, every single agonising step of the way, fought for with the comrades and resources we have now. And an absolutely vital 'moment' in our fight for a mass, revolutionary Communist Party, the one that probably more than any other reveals itself as the embryo of what our organisation will become in the future, is our annual Summer Offensive. It is the seed in the dialectical process of fighting for a Communist Party, even though it takes a primitive, abstract and undeveloped form.

Subbotnik

Lenin attached enormous significance to the appearance of subbotniks in Russia, seeing in them what he called "a victory over our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism". They were for Lenin the "shoots of communism".

So what were these subbotniks and what relevance do they have to the practice of Leninists today?

The subbotniks were initiated in Moscow by the communist workers of the Moscow-Kazan railway. On Saturday, May 10 1919, at 6pm, "the communists and sympathisers turned up to work like soldiers, formed ranks, and without fuss or bustle were taken by the foreman to the various jobs." As well as doing unpaid work on this 'Communist Saturday' these proletarian heroes did several hours of voluntary unpaid labour after the ordinary working day.

This communist subbotnik was initiated in response to an appeal by the Soviet government for workers in the rear to match the sacrifices of the Red Army in its fight against counterrevolution. Lenin saw the resulting communist labour as containing the seeds of the final goal of communism, it was "labour performed gratis for the benefit of society, labour performed not as definite duty, not for the purpose of obtaining a right to certain objects, not according to a previously established and legally fixed quota: it is labour performed without expectation of reward, without reward as a condition, labour performed because it has become a habit to work for the common good, and because of a conscious realisation (that has become a habit) of the necessity of working for the common good – labour as the requirement of a healthy organism." (VI Lenin, *CW*, Vol 30, p517)

The comrades who fight to build our Summer Offensives will immediately recognise the parallel between revolutionary Russia's subbotniks and the way our organisation conducts its affairs. To storm the Seventh Summer Offensive, our militants will cut down on food, drink and tobacco, raid their banks accounts and sell possessions. They will work overtime and take second jobs. Comrades will be organising sponsored swims, bike rides, barbecues and socials.

What all that amounts to in our conditions is the "shoots of communism". In contrast to the dead heads of 'official communism', our comrades will engage in this exacting work with enthusiasm, joy even. They are able to do this because it is genuine communist work.

Like Lenin's Bolsheviks, the genuinely communist work which comprises the Summer Offensive has become *habitual* with us. Comrades do not work because of an outside compulsion.

Ours is a voluntary organisation, our comrades consciously undertake the work entailed in the Summer Offensive. So if external compulsion – either in the form of threats or expectation of reward – is not the motive force for Leninists, what is? In fact, the Summer Offensive is the high point in the Leninist calendar of fighting for communist morality as a vital weapon in the class struggle.

Our morality is "what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat, which is building a new, communist society ... to a communist all morality lies in this united discipline and conscious mass struggle against the exploiters ... Morality serves the purpose of helping human society rise to a higher level

and rid itself of the exploitation of labour ... Communist morality is based on the struggle for the consolidation and completion of communism." (VI Lenin, *CW*, Vol 31, pp290-5)

Alongside the morality that justifies the existing social order there develops a morality that denies it. Under capitalist society, this morality is our *communist morality*: the morality of the proletariat's class struggle which stands in *opposition* to the hypocritical morality of the exploiters, bourgeois morality.

Communist morality does not just regulate the behaviour of individual comrades. It is also a weapon in the fight to overthrow class society itself. It is therefore an active factor in the class struggle. With this in mind we must guard and develop our communist morality. The stronger our communist morality, the more effective our work, our cohesion and our power to win the best elements in the proletariat.

The Summer Offensive acts as an exemplary purge of our body politic. *Exemplary* in the sense that the Summer Offensive graphically illustrates that Leninists intend to put our money where our mouth is, that we don't just talk a good revolution. *Purge* – in the sense that the annual Summer Offensive always has the positive effect of flushing out all that is soft and decaying. Again, there is a parallel here between Lenin's analysis of the subbotniks and the CPGB (*TL*)'s campaign: the communist subbotnik, he wrote, must be utilised to *purge* the party.

"The cowards and the scoundrels fled from the Party's ranks. Good riddance! Such a reduction in the Party's membership means an enormous increase in its strength and weight. We must continue the purge, and that new beginning, the 'communist subbotnik', must be utilised for this purpose." (*CW*, Vol 29, p432).

And this purge need not take the form of purging individuals. Rather, we can score important victories "over our own conservatism, indiscipline, petty bourgeois egoism". We can purge the organisation ideologically. We also answer our critics.

In practically every country in the world, the working people display a healthy cynicism about the motives of their rulers and alternative rulers in general. Unfortunately, given the bloated privileges of the bureaucracies in the socialist countries, this cynicism is directed against communists also. As the rulers of Eastern Europe and the USSR scramble to get their snouts in the trough of capitalist restoration, this poisonous cynicism could grow. The Summer Offensive and the sacrifices it entails underlines in blood, sweat and tears that Leninists are not in politics for personal aggrandisement or reward. Unlike the 'official communists', Leninists are genuinely of and for the people.

Development

In closing, we will briefly look at the history of our Summer Offensive so far, to illustrate how it reflects the development of our organisation and what it tells us about our future.

August 1984 – the Second Conference of comrades forming the nucleus of *The Leninist* met in London. It took the decision to launch a Summer Offensive for 1985 consisting of three weeks income for working comrades and two weeks for students or unemployed. As a 'warm up', a mini-offensive was launched to run from late summer of 1984.

This conference saw objections from certain then leading elements of our organisation who protested that although they were not worried by the sacrifice, 'ordinary workers' would be put off. This mealy mouthed opportunism was decisively rejected by conference, which pointed to the heavy financial and personal sacrifices being made by the miners then and there in the course of the Great Strike.

The elements who raised these 'problems' subsequently showed the worth of their criticisms by their desertion of our organisation. They ended up in the orbit of organisations like *Straight Left*, which they had previously taken a lead in fighting on the basis of Leninist politics. Still, anything for a quiet life, eh citizens ...? June 29-September 28 1986, the

Third Summer Offensive. A minimum of three weeks income was set for this campaign. This Offensive still relied on changing personal patterns of consumption, reflecting the fact that our organisation had still not really developed mass political work of any kind. This is how we saw the success of the Third Summer Offensive: "We held regular sales of personal possessions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. We urged a scrapping on food and drink. We pleaded for money from friends and cajoled our readers mercilessly." The most successful participant in 1986 raised £600, the basic minimum we are encouraging comrades to start from this year! On average our comrades raised £252, despite the fact that half of those taking part were jobless. At the time, we compared this to the £5 average of the Euro dominated organisation's annual fund drive and noted that we had raised two and a half times more than the year before.

Yet on one level, we also stated that this Offensive represented a step back. It was one month shorter, yes, but then there were three times as many comrades taking part. Clearly, there had been a dilution of commitment. This was at least in part a product of the defeat of the miners' Great Strike and the wave of demoralisation it provoked.

Fifth Summer Offensive, 1988 – It raised £10,500 and really started to act as an organic part of the practice of our group for the first time. A feature of this Offensive that is likely to be repeated this year was its geographical lopsidedness. The closer one got to London – and our organised, planned activity at the centre of the organisation – the more participants were found, pledging higher and higher amounts. (And our drive to draw in readers and sympathisers from around the country still remains to be fulfilled.)

While we have yet to draw readers in, this Offensive also reflected the advances of our organisation in 'turning out'. Of the comrades taking a full part in 1988, the average participant raised over 40% by belt-tightening. The remaining 60% of target was gathered from outside sources. This year's Offensive will see a much higher percentage of 'external' fundraising as our organisation develops its ability to win the sympathy of ordinary workers.

June/July 1989, The Sixth Summer Offensive – we doubled and more than met the 1988 total. A £20,000 target was set, reflecting the growth of our organisation and its expertise. The fact that the campaign was now an organic part of our practice was indicated by the fact that we didn't simply tot up individual targets. We set a central goal for the organisation as an organisation to strive for.

This year's Seventh Summer Offensive has a target of £25,000 and we are confident we can achieve this ambitious sum.

Some readers may think that placing such demands on our comrades must badly disrupt the work of the organisation, even demoralise and drive away potential support. In fact, as we have shown, the annual Summer Offensive of the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*) acts to hone our organisation: to give direction and impetus to our work throughout the year. The Summer Offensive is a political question, not only a financial one.

Each Summer Offensive so far has been a step forward; problems have been problems of growth. The Offensive is not artificially grafted onto our general political practice, as degenerate elements within our ranks once argued; it is an organic product of our approach to building a Leninist Communist Party in Britain today, an approach that finds a resonance with advanced militants and revolutionaries from other countries who are also fighting to build genuine revolutionary proletarian parties.

Our Summer Offensive is about making and, crucially, remaking communists against the pressures of bourgeois society. We urge all readers and sympathisers of our paper to participate in the Seventh Summer Offensive, to be part of the process of reforging a Leninist Communist Party in this country and in every country in the world.

- Inventiveness, dedication and dynamism for the Seventh Summer Offensive!
- Comrades! Give your all for the Party!
- Long live Leninism!

Ian Mahoney



Even while the Euros debate their 'exciting' future, one of their stars has decided to pre-empt them and vote with his feet. So farewell, then, John Peck. A man who made it his life's ambition to be a pillar of the local establishment in Nottingham, Peck was the Euros only councillor in England. The "renowned" Peck (Morning Star) has now given up the pretence to have anything to do with communism and joined the Green Party. Where he has gone today, other petty bourgeois Euros will soon follow.

The Euros are divided, divided on which way to finally liquidate themselves. Some want to join the Labour Party via a merger with the 'left' Kinnockite LCC, others say close down and seek "new" (Green?) allies, still others want a loose network, while a few want to rename and "modernise" the existing organisation. A number of suggestions will be put forward for their July executive to consider: Federation of Democratic Socialists, Socialist Federation, British Democratic Socialists, Democratic Socialist Party. Surely now that Dr David Owen has decided - to the regret of Euro secretary Nina Temple - to close down his SDP, they could open up a new SDP. Whatever they do we are sure of one thing. They are doomed to go further to the right.

Just how right wing the Euros have become can be seen in the advertising policy of Marxism Today. While they used to ban adverts for The Leninist, fascists are now given a platform. This journal recently ran an advert for the Third Way, ie the old National Front. Maybe Martin Jacques - who also advocates a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism - fancies himself as Britain's Mussolini.

Finally, having mentioned the third way Marxism Today, a comrade of ours who used to subscribe to it tells us that he still receives the mag along with pleas for him to resubscribe ... a full year after his original sub to the turgid journal lapsed! After having its subsidy from the Euro organisation cut by £30,000 a year, are they stupid? Or are they trying to keep up their audited circulation figures to keep up their advertising charges? Answers on a postcard to our box number. For the first correct answer out of the hat, a free subscription to ... wait! Where are you all going?

Our history

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos

LEFT critics of the British Socialist Party refused to unite with it in a Communist Party over one, for them, key issue: affiliation to the Labour Party. Legitimacy was given to their stubborn intransigence by the Amsterdam sub-bureau of the Communist International headed by SJ Rutgers. Its communication "addressed to the Communists of Great Britain" denouncing any communist activity in the Labour Party was eagerly reproduced in the Socialist Labour Party's *The Socialist*, on May 6 1920, and two days later in the *Workers Dreadnaught*, the paper of the Workers Socialist Federation.

The BSP's reply was "given careful consideration", only printed after it had been fully discussed by its Executive Committee. Labour Party affiliation was "purely tactical", the BSP was therefore prepared to refer the issue to the membership of a united Communist Party to decide. For it, communist unity was the main question, and hence the intervention of the Amsterdam sub-bureau was "entirely gratuitous and mischievous"; a view that could only be reinforced by the coinciding announcement from the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow that it had "unanimously decided to annul the mandate of the Amsterdam sub-bureau", because of its ultra-leftism.

BSP replies to Amsterdam

Dear comrade SJ Rutgers,

You state (point 1): "In accordance with the resolution

passed at the February Conference in Amsterdam we are of the opinion that Communists should not be affiliated either directly or indirectly to political organisations that accept the principles of the Second International. For England such an organisation is no doubt the Labour Party."

Our staying outside the Labour Party would not prevent the arrival of the Noskes, but it would effectively undermine one source of Communist influence which could be used against them at a critical moment.

The second danger you mention takes for granted the coming to power of the Labour Party at an early date. Certainly the signs point in that direction, but here again we warn you that it is quite unsafe to build a British analogy on a German precedent. And even if the expected happens and a Labour Government takes office, there will be no catastrophe as you suppose. No failure of the Labour Party, however complete, will involve us, for we have defined our position too clearly. The ... resolution, carried unanimously at our Easter Conference ... prove(s) this ...

Moreover, you presuppose a swing to the right by the workers as

a result of the failure of a Labour Government. We, on the contrary, believe a swing to the left far more likely, and we feel we should be false to all our principles if we allowed such a movement to proceed without being both in it and of it.

You seek to turn what is purely a question of tactics into a question of principle. In point 4 you say: "Since we agree with those Communists in England that object to participation in the Labour Party, we are of opinion they should not give up their attitude on a plea of unity. Much as we would like to see a united Communist Party in England it may be better to postpone this ideal than to compromise on important issues."

In reply to communication asking for his views on the movement towards Communist Unity in this country, Comrade Lenin declared: "The Communist Party is the supreme issue; all other questions are secondary to that." Not so the Executive Committee of the Amsterdam Sub-Bureau. You would prefer the indefinite postponement of Communist Unity rather than the acceptance of a particular attitude on a minor point of tactics. From that view we most emphatically dissent. For the BSP the question of the Communist Party is the supreme issue, now as heretofore. In its desire to achieve unity the BSP has made concession after concession, finally giving up the question of Labour Party affiliation entirely, provided that non-affiliation was not imposed upon the Communist Party in advance, as a fixed basis to be adhered to at all times and under all circumstances. In doing so we were not abandoning any of our beliefs, for we felt convinced that the necessities of a revolutionary movement would compel the Communist Party eventually to share the views we hold. We felt, too, that the appeal of the Third International for Communist Unity was not lightly to be disregarded, and were prepared to surrender much that we thought important in order to attain that end. The obstacle to Communist Unity in Britain is not the view held by the BSP regarding affiliation to the Labour Party; it is the determination of other sections to deprive the members of the Communist Party of any share in fashioning its tactics by deliberately and definitely tying the hands of the Party before it is formed. To such a course the BSP cannot, under any circumstances, agree.

You do not view the situation in this country in its right perspective. You visualise a Britain that does not exist. You imagine Workers' Committees springing up everywhere, with thousands of members, all Communists and led by Communists, only waiting the word to take the organisation of the

workers out of the nerveless hands of the Trade Union bureaucracy. You see the political initiative in similar fashion being taken away from the Labour Party. Regrettably, we inform you that you have been misinformed and misled. The British working class will move - have no fear of that. But it will move through its own institutions, and impelled by the accumulated experience of its own historic past.

We propose to be with it in all its struggles, even to share with it the consequences of its mistakes. For being revolutionists we are also realists. Your theories might lead to an ineffective "left wing of the left wing," but nothing more. Let those who will follow that path. For ourselves we shall continue to be with the masses of the workers wherever they are - even in the Labour Party, helping them in their struggles, pointing out their mistakes, opposing the influence of their opportunist leaders and seeking always to inspire them with our communist ideals.

Having thus stated the position of the BSP, we wish, in conclusion to protest against the intervention of the Amsterdam Sub-Bureau in a matter that lies altogether outside the mandate conferred upon it by the Third International. The function of the Sub-Bureau is to assist the Communist Parties in Western Europe by the systematic distribution of literature and information; not to lay down rules and regulations regarding policy or to give instructions as to the particular tactics the Communist Parties shall apply. The February Conference at Amsterdam was altogether unrepresentative, and, as the official report of the proceedings published in the Bulletin (No 2) distinctly states, "the theses and resolutions voted can only have a provisory character." Nevertheless, those same theses and resolutions (adopted in some cases by the aid of the votes of the representatives of a German section that has since been excluded from the Third International) are advanced as presenting "the attitude of the Bureau towards affiliation of Communist groups and parties to the British Labour Party." The good service the Bureau might have rendered the organisations of the Third International in this country, had it confined itself within the limits of its mandate, are being nullified by its gratuitous intervention in a matter of party tactics over which it has no jurisdiction, and regarding which its knowledge of local conditions is necessarily incomplete. Against such unwarranted interference we desire most emphatically to protest.

Yours fraternally,
Executive Committee of the BSP,
JAS Crossley, JF Hodgson, H Hinshelwood, C Martin, G Roberts,
Fred Shaw, AA Watts, Albert Inkpin (Secretary), Fred Willis (BSP Delegate to Amsterdam Conference).
The Call No 214, May 13 1920

Keep It...

International Secretariat of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, *Trottskyist International*, Issue 4, Spring 1990, pp68, £1-50

Workers Power/Irish Workers Group, *Stalinism in Crisis – the Road to Working Class Power*, 1990, pp 44, 75p

LIKE all Trotskyites, the British Workers Power group and their co-thinkers in the Irish Workers Group and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International have had their smug doctrinaire certainties about the world thrown into crisis by the momentous events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Trottskyist International speaks with the 'weight' of the LRCI behind it – the bulk of the document consists of resolutions adopted by its Executive Committee over the last year or so. There the 'authority' stops, however. Far from displaying "scope and rigour", as they claim, they illustrate profound theoretical confusion.

We are not simply dealing here with a basically sound methodology that has 'hiccupped': these publications, the codified platforms of the LRCI, underline the inherent bankruptcy of Trotskyism as an impotent, left liquidationist split from the world communist movement – a split that in its almost pathological hatred of that world movement and of existing socialism, has found itself lining up with and cheering on bloody counterrevolution in what were the socialist states.

In *Stalinism in Crisis* we are told on page 36 that "...the political revolution began as the masses took to the streets ... the political revolution against Stalinism began in 1989." Elsewhere we are told that "to the extent that Trotskyism succeeds", God help us, "then the victory of the political revolution will become possible." (Our emphasis).

The contradiction is only an apparent one. For Workers Power and their chums, it does not matter who leads the uprising against the 'Stalinists', they will offer them their unconditional support. For have they not already stated that they will back any Eastern Bloc workers' struggles "whatever form it takes" (*Workers Power*, February 1990, our emphasis).

Let's draw all this together, shall we? The LRCI says the political revolution, which "Trotsky struggled for until his death", has actually begun. Their political revolution – against a workers' state, albeit bureaucratically deformed – has commenced without any form of revolutionary consciousness: it has kicked off spontaneously (ie without communist leadership) and is led by openly bourgeois forces. But that doesn't matter, the LRCI offers them unconditional support because at least they are against the 'Stalinists'.

These Trotskyites attempt to square the circle by now raising the demand for a "thoroughgoing political revolution" (*Stalinism in Crisis* p11), a "proletarian political revolution" (*Ibid*). Which neatly dodges the issue of the exact class nature of the 'political revolution' they have been getting hot and steamy about thus far. Their 'stalled' political revolution has clearly been a bourgeois affair – something they clearly recognise by their 'proletarian' appendage to the call. And think hard, comrades. What would be a word for a mass uprising, led by bourgeois forces at the head of people im-

bued with bourgeois illusions against a workers' state?

Counterrevolution is the word. And *counterrevolution* is what these Trotskyites have been backing to the hilt.

We Leninists have been castigated for designating the upheavals in Eastern Europe peaceful, democratic *counterrevolutions*. This, according to the likes of Workers Power, the Sparts et al, was 'running the film of reformism backwards'. It confirmed our status as nothing but a bunch of left-leaning 'Stalinists' (ie left leaning counterrevolutionaries according to Trot folklore).

Now, on page 12 of *TI* we read that "a relatively peaceful capitalist restoration is not impossible" in countries like the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary or ... Poland. Well, well! What a turn up for the books, eh? Blinded by dogma, the Trotskyites could not bring themselves to admit that following World War II the 'counterrevolutionary Stalinists' had overthrown capitalism in Eastern Europe. Now, still groping in the dark, they cannot spot when these states have themselves been overthrown by counterrevolution. For Workers Power, the first were 'counterrevolutionary social overturns': today, movements which are explicit in their hatred of socialism, their love of capitalism and their reactionary programmes are dubbed to be leading Trotsky's 'political revolution'.

If that is your political revolution, LRCI – keep it!

Ian Mahoney

Connolly's Shoulders

Andy Johnston, James Larragy, Edward McWilliams, *Connolly: A Marxist Analysis*, Irish Workers Group, pp175, £3.75.

Kieran Allen, *The Politics of James Connolly*, Pluto Press, pp206, £3.95.

BOTH BOOKS are critiques of Ireland's foremost revolutionary socialist by two groups on the Irish left; the Socialist Workers Movement, of which Allen is a leading member, and the Irish Workers Group, which split from the former in the early '70s. They are the fraternal organisations of the SWP and *Workers Power* in Britain.

Both are worthwhile contributions to a critical understanding of Connolly, in particular the IWG publication, which is based on a series of incisive articles in their journal *Class Struggle* back in 1984; articles which Allen seems to have used in his appraisal.

The two books analyse the manner in which Connolly drew on the writings of James Fintan Lalor, the 19th century Irish petty bourgeois revolutionary. They compare Lalor – and Connolly to an extent – to the Russian Narodniks, who argued that there was no basis for capitalist development in Russia because there was no possibility of developing an adequate internal market. This underconsumptionist theory was comprehensively answered by Lenin in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

The IWG points out that Connolly was open to falling into this trap, because of the sort of 'Marxism' he learnt in Britain, which was itself underconsumptionist. If, therefore, the independent capitalist road of development was not open to Ireland, Irish republicans must and should be drawn to socialism as their only road to national liberation. Connolly thus seriously neglected a consideration

of the bourgeois essence of nationalism. He collapsed the national and social tasks of the revolution. His slogan "The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour..." reflects this. Lenin's theory of uninterrupted revolution analyses how the proletariat must undertake the tasks of the bourgeois revolution, and continue uninterruptedly through to socialism. Connolly's formulation, though a break from the mechanical determinism of the Second International, confuses class forces and tasks.

Though Connolly cannot fairly be characterised as a nationalist, his outlook led him to make what were, in the end, fatal concessions to nationalism. This was the result of the situation which moulded his perspectives: the Marxism of the Second International, Irish republicanism and American syndicalism. These, notes the IWG, "led him to a very eclectic view of how the class struggle should be consciously organised against capitalism." (p131). Connolly's evolution was characterised by a political weakness which prevented the creation of a 'party of a new type', which Lenin had done.

Connolly's syndicalistic reliance on spontaneity led to despair at the outbreak of World War I: "In these circumstances Connolly's press became more vociferous in demanding exemplary action by the minority to awaken the nation and the working class" (Allen, p133). This was to condition his attitude towards the Rising. He "was driven to this method of insurrection by the gulf between the horrors of war and the weakness of working class organisation" (*Ibid*, p144).

Though the Rising saw, for the first time, working class forces entering the revolutionary stage independently in the form of the Irish Citizen Army, this went hand in hand with a political subordination to republicanism. Yet, as the IWG points out, prior to this Connolly had led struggles which had successfully raised the combativity and consciousness of important sections of the working class. These "forces that had emerged with him from the Lockout ... were to be ideologically disarmed and politically liquidated into revolutionary nationalism" (IWG, p148).

So, the key is the party, as the two books agree. We too agree. Yet, what positive contribution are these organisations able to make today? The inadequacies of Connolly's approach were real, and well pointed out in these books. But to be effective criticism, surely it must be reflected in the active contributions of these two organisations. We do not see this from either. It is not just a question of having a small cadre with which to intervene. Connolly, after all, never led any effective party, yet his contribution was undeniable.

When Allen rightly characterises Lenin's polemic on the Easter Rising as being "directed at those in the revolutionary camp who did not know how to relate to the movements of the oppressed" (p155), he could be writing of his own organisation. For two decades a revolutionary situation has existed in the Six Counties. Both organisations bemoan its domination by nationalism. Yet neither have been able break this hold or relate in practice to the revolutionary war.

Practice is the real test for Marxists. For all the failings of Connolly, his ability to relate to the real movement of the workers and oppressed still sets this one man towering above both these organisations. Ireland still awaits those who can stand on his shoulders.

Alan Merrick

ACTION

The Leninist

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135. Series on the CPGB: From right centrism to Eurocommunism (continued):

July 1: The impact of the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia.

July 8: Seventh Summer Offensive: second progress meeting. Series on the CPGB: Euro and anti-Euro opposition:

July 15: The debate around the 1977 Draft BRS.

July 22: The formation of the NCP and the crisis of the centrist opposition.

July 29: End of Summer Offensive meeting: 70th anniversary of the foundation of the CPGB.

August 5: The launch and development of *The Leninist*.

August 12: The significance of the Fourth Conference.

Hands Off Ireland!

London activists' meetings: Central London, 7.30pm every Thursday: Phone 071-431 3135 for details.

Workers Theatre Movement

WTM club *The Internationale*:

Wednesday July 4: Celebrate American revolutions and American revolutionaries, 7.30pm Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1. Late bar, food. Admission £3, unwaged £2. Music, dance, theatre, including a WTM performance of *Waiting for Lefty*.

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London. Phone Lisa on 071-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

Unemployed Workers Charter

London activist meetings: Ring 071-431 3135 for details.

UWC streetwork: Collection sheet to sponsor unemployed marchers on the Glasgow to London anti-poll tax march, September/October 1990.

UWC Petition against ET, YTS and the "actively seeking work" clause. Collect signatures and cash for the UWC. Send SAE for 6 petition sheets. UWC needs £500 per week!

Unemployed Organiser: Bulk prices including postage: 8 for £1; 100 plus at 10 for £1

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The Gorbachev solution: disintegration, crisis and counterrevolution

LIKE a substandard schoolboy handed back his homework, Nikolai Ryzhkov has been told to go away and come back in September with a more coherent, more overtly capitalist restorationist programme. (Whether or not he will is doubtful: rumour now has it that he will soon be shoved sideways). His original plan, which consisted of abolishing state controlled prices as the main way of moving towards a 'regulated' market system, produced panic buying by the masses and contempt from openly pro-capitalist 'radicals' and traditional bureaucrats alike.

Beset by enough problems already, Gorbachev cleverly distanced himself from his prime minister's proposals and managed to get the Supreme Soviet to vote him powers to carry out economic 'reforms' via presidential decree.

Where Gorbachev wants to go with these dictatorial powers is clear. His personal economic advisor, Nikolai Petrakov, wrote off Ryzhkov's original price reform as being meaningless unless the conditions of free competition were first established to underpin it: "First of all," he says, "it is necessary to create conditions for competition. The soul of the market is competition" (*Financial Times*, June 4 1990).

He advocates that Gorbachev introduces "sweeping privatisation plans, financial liberalisation and a repeal of the powers invested in the state planning apparatus, the state supply bureaucracy and the industrial ministries" (*The Economist*, June 9 1990). In short, a speedy return to capitalism, rather than Ryzhkov's faltering approach.

Gorbachev is now expected to use his powers of decree to introduce the programme advocated by Petrakov and others. Along with supporting a 'regulated market economy' in principle, Gorbachev is mandated to begin a process of denationalisation - 40% of state industry within two years, 60% within three: whatever he says to the contrary, capitalist restoration.

Gorbachev rebuffed Yegor Ligachev at the recent inaugural congress of the Russian Communist Party, by stating that "the market appeared with the dawn of civilisation". This is shallow and amateur sophistry. Where it did exist, it played a subordinate role in society, which is not how Gorbachev views his reforms. Certainly, joint stock companies did not exist in ancient Mesopotamia, but they have just been reintroduced in the Soviet Union.

An important indicator of the direction of such reforms are the proposed changes in the monetary system of the Soviet Union. Influential Soviet economist and a deputy prime minister, Leonid Abalkin, advocates that a fully convertible 'hard' rouble be established by the start of 1991. Yeltsin has similar ideas for the Russian Federation: a gold-backed 'hard' rouble, in parallel initially with the existing currency. Back in the 1920s a similar system was forced on the Soviet Union as a response to the post-Civil War economic collapse. It led to hyperinflation in

The proposed referendum has disappeared without a trace. Democracy, even sham democracy, is a dangerous game. After all, who is going to vote for a tripling in the price of bread and other necessities?

the non-convertible rouble and a crisis situation.

In today's context such measures are equivalent to the abolition of the state monopoly of foreign trade, directly subordinating the Soviet Union to the world capitalist market. The realisation of this effectively abolishes any semblance of a planned economy. It guarantees the dominance of the law of value. Like a good Thatchertite, Abalkin turns round and blames the attendant attack on living standards on those who will suffer it: "People are going to have to realise soon that if [if?] their personal standard of living drops, it's not always the government's fault. It's their fault too" (quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, June 14 1990).

Despite the move to an overt, indeed extreme, market approach, the Soviet leadership has no coherent programme. Different sections of the bureaucracy are presenting their own road back to capitalism. This is the economic drive behind the political disintegration of the Soviet Union along national lines. Individual republics are demanding the right to sell their exports at world market prices, while still being able to import from other republics at existing subsidised Soviet prices. Where will this subsidy come from? The £4,000 a month Gorbachev has awarded himself?

The Baltic republics and Yeltsin's new Russian government have already started the ball rolling. The heart of the Soviet Union has now proclaimed its own sovereignty and its intention to veto Soviet laws which contradict those of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin opposes the heavy handed blockade of Lithuania - and wants to reestablish trade with it, and all other Soviet republics, at world market prices!

The most important aspect of this will be the end to the subsidy on oil 'exports', which Yeltsin reckons will net the Russian Federation an extra 70 billion rubles a year. Fidel Castro has already warned that the Soviet Union is establishing an exploitative relationship with once 'fraternal' states such as Cuba; now it looks like doing the same 'internally' as it fragments.

For Gorbachev, the horse has bolted. Imperialism's 'man of the year' has no more control of the Soviet Union than Michael Fish has of the British weather. The *Financial Times* is one of the British media's greatest supporters of Gorbachev. Now, even it begins to wonder if its superman has become a "helpless relic, a pitiful victim of his own well-meaning but bungled reforms" (June 4). And if the answer is not quite 'yes' yet, that is only because there is, so far, no more viable restorationist alternative waiting in the wings. The

clowning demagogue Yeltsin at the helm would produce an economic ruin of a Soviet dis-Union even more surely.

The best the west's man can do is to apply an ineffective brake as the Soviet Union hurtles to destruction. He seems now little more than a spectator at the break up of his own state and party. Mid-June saw the establishment of a separate Russian party organisation, as equally nationalistic as its virtually redundant Baltic counterparts. The debates at the congress - for once real and bitter - saw further development towards disintegration within the CPSU. It is now taken as read that the pro-Yeltsin Democratic Platform will split at the coming 28th congress of the CPSU. Although it has the support of a most heterogeneous base, the dominant group within the Platform is the section of the party bureaucracy and intelligentsia which sees itself as having most to gain from capitalism.

On the other side of the coin, Ligachev is virtually demanding Gorbachev's head, and indicated the growing differentiation of the CPSU by proposing that all members of the Politburo give individual reports to the congress. The section of the bureaucracy which has its roots in the old status quo is being dragged into open rebellion by the dismantling of socialism and by its fear of the market. They are fighting a rearguard action. There can be no going back.

Gorbachev is riding two horses, and they are pulling off in different directions. A nasty case of political groin-strain seems imminent. It is clear that this situation cannot but propel the Gorbachevites to the right, into an ever clearer counterrevolutionary role. The stand off with the Ligachev-style 'conservatives' (who have proposed a referendum on whether the Soviet people want capitalism or socialism) has given way increasingly to plans for a speedy return to capitalism. Indeed, this is becoming a mad scramble as the ground crumbles beneath Gorbachev's feet.

The Soviet Union's prospects must be seen in the light of the ending of undisputed US hegemony over the other imperialist powers. Uneven development and the end of the Cold War is resulting in the crystallisation of world imperialism into three distinct rival power blocs: a German dominated Europe, a US dominated North America and a Japanese dominated East Asia. These rivals will seek to turn the Soviet Union, and what were a short time ago the socialist countries of eastern Europe, into neo-colonies, a collection of crisis fraught capitalist satellites. What a 'great statesman' this Gorbachev is.

Of course, this situation is not the result of Gorbachev alone.

intensive production. The bureaucratic plan could not even fill Moscow's shops with fresh fruit. As the needs of modern production developed, Soviet stagnation set in.

It is not the plan *per se* which has created this situation, but the parasitic bureaucracy which determined its form - a form not controlled by mass democracy, but one where the producers, as under capitalism, are alienated from the production process. Unlike capitalism, though, production was not rationalised by one determining social law. It was increasingly paralysed by the distorted, partial operation of the two. Increasingly, it had many of the disadvantages of capitalist production, with none of its advantages.

Gorbachev's failures are not the failure of communism: rather the crisis in the Soviet Union today is the crisis of bureaucratic socialism and the new Gorbachevite proto-bourgeois 'alternative'. Gorbachev's solution is no solution for anyone but the strata of Soviet society which he represents: those for whom personal privilege, constrained by the overall economic stagnation which no-one but themselves created, has induced a need to become capitalist.

Hoping for Gorbachev to in any way side with the working class is a non-starter. His section of the bureaucracy has within it its own dynamic, which is taking it ever further away from the working class.

The only alternative for the working class in the Soviet Union is a democratic plan controlled by the working class. Neither Gorbachev, Yeltsin nor Ligachev can introduce this. Despite their differences, they are united in the understanding that to do so would be to cut their own throats.

The only way that the gains of the October Revolution can be defended is by extending them, through a proletarian political revolution. As the counterrevolution gathers momentum, the necessary political revolution will be forced to take on social tasks, to reclaim the ground lost to the restorationists.

The bureaucracy has done much to discredit Marxism-Leninism in the eyes of the Soviet proletariat. But to win, nothing else will do; certainly not the populist demagogues or Solidarnosc-type trade unions which dominate the workers movement now. There are encouraging signs. Groups such as the Moscow-based Marxist Platform within the CPSU, and the Urals-based Marxist Workers Party - Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat outside it, have put forward, however hesitantly and incoherently, the need to return to the principles of the Bolsheviks under Lenin, and are in opposition to the bureaucracy's restorationist road. The true content of this is unclear, but such sentiments can only be encouraging.

True, the bureaucratic plan developed extensive growth effectively. However, micro-computers, semi-conductors and other electronics are the measure of an economy's level of development today. This requires integrated and

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